

*Education of the Premedical Student in the Humanities and the
Biological and Physical Sciences*

Introductory Remarks*

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It is possible to contend that the most retrogressive activity associated with contemporary American medicine is medical education. In examining this contention we may consider the following evidences:

- 1) A tendency toward relaxation of the requirements for admission to medical school.
- 2) The disesteem of humanistic prerequisites and the emphasis on technical prerequisites for admission, despite formal declarations to the contrary.
- 3) The increase in the size of medical classes.
- 4) The resultant reduction of contact between professor and student.
- 5) The curtailment of the medical school curriculum.
- 6) The reduction in its content—some classes and clinics being replaced by electives or by blank spaces.
- 7) The fabrication of combined curricula, which lead to the award of two university degrees, either simultaneously or in rapid succession.
- 8) The destructive attack on the now prostrate general or rotating internship.
- 9) The premature inception of training in medical specialties.

Most of these changes, which tend to restore pre-Flexnerian conditions, were instituted after the customary invocations to the gods—the American gods of progress, efficiency, and speed. And the gods, or the Fates, or more probably the Furies, are allowing them to be put into effect.

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Whether or not our present educational difficulties merit the name of crisis (analogous to the crises which ambitious politicians see or imagine in the realm of medical care), our problems have caused abundant and vigorous discussion, exemplified by the presentations that we are to hear at this symposium. Since it may well be that the educational deficiencies of the American physician are related to educational deprivation visited upon him *before he enters the medical school*, the first of today's panels is devoted to Education of the Premedical Student in the Humanities and the Biological and Physical Sciences.